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ABSTRACT

In August 1995, the teachers at an elementary school in Houston (Texas) voted to adopt teacher-led study groups as their form of staff development for the 1995-96 school year. This study documents the progress of one of these groups, the Multiple Intelligences group, and examines the changes that occurred in roles and relationships as the teachers took charge of their own learning. Data collected through observations of study group and other staff development sessions were analyzed through a reconstructive analysis to show roles and power relations. The Multiple Intelligences study group had 15 participants (not counting the principal, who attended only one meeting), representatives of all the instructional programs at the school. The view of knowledge as a thing that can be passed from experts to teacher was widely held at the beginning of the study group. By the end of the second session, roles had begun to shift as teachers moved from waiting to be filled with knowledge to working as professionals together to improve their practice. By the end of the group meetings, the facilitator had become a voice in the conversation rather than a determining force. The roles members assumed in the course of the study are described as they changed, and power structures that also fluctuated are outlined. The study group became a place for teachers to explore issues of common concern and to develop ways of dealing with the contradictions of self-governance in the face of increasingly strict bureaucratic mandates. (Contains two tables, three figures, and nine references.) (SLD)

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Study Groups: Collaboration and Conflagration

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting
of the American Educational Research Association
Chicago, Illinois
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Study Groups: Collaboration and Conflagration

Study groups have long been used as a means for like-minded individuals to share knowledge and ideas, and their format has been adapted to endeavors as diverse as insurance sales (Zemke, 1982), union activism (Harnsten, 1994), and raising the academic achievement of elementary school students (Murphy, 1995). In the field of education, the genre has been given a variety of names, among them study groups, collaborative inquiry, or teacher research. Whatever its name, the concept of teachers collaborating to improve their practice has been in existence for a number of years and is seen by contemporary researchers as central to school reform (Fullan, 1990; Lieberman, 1995).

In order for schools to become the communities of learners that reformers have envisioned, teachers will need to take a more active role in their professional development, both in its planning and delivery. In August of 1995, teachers at Sam Houston Elementary School voted almost unanimously to adopt teacher-led study groups as their form of staff development for the 1995-96 school year. I had become very interested in the way that teachers at my school had begun to question the value of outsiders who came to "fix" our teaching practice. Since a number of us had expressed an interest in alternative forms of staff development, I saw this as an opportunity to document the changes that occurred, particularly in roles and relationships, as teachers took charge of their own learning.

The Study

The study began with a general question about the ways that teachers changed as a result of their participation in teacher-generated staff development. During the course of the 1995-96 school, the following questions emerged as central in view of the events that transpired. They were:

1. How do the roles that teachers adopt within study groups affect their relationships with one another, both within the study groups and in the school at large?
2. How are power relations altered as teachers become active participants in their own professional development?

A qualitative research design was used to conduct this study because of the researcher's

choice to examine informants' subjective experiences. The research stance was critical, with the goal of empowering teachers as they strive to make their practice more meaningful, both to themselves and the students they teach as well as equalizing power relations within the school.

Participants in the study were faculty members and administrators at Sam Houston Elementary School (not its real name), located in a large urban school district in the southwestern United States. There is little faculty turnover, and teachers as well as the administration show a great deal of interest in their professional growth, as evidenced by high levels of participation in a wide variety of traditional workshops. Perhaps because of their extensive training experiences, they are highly critical of outside "experts," which led them to choose study groups as their principal form of staff development for the 1995-96 school year.

Data were collected through observations of study group and other staff development sessions, which were audiotaped and accompanied by field notes with thick descriptions, journalistic notes of other meetings and events at the school, and the collection of various documents relating to school governance and staff development activities. A number of participants were interviewed, based on their membership in the researcher's study group or their role within the social system within the school, specifically study group facilitators, members of the researcher's study group and the school's administrators. These interviews were audiotaped and accompanied by thick field notes describing the informants' gestures, body language and tone of voice.

The data were analyzed through reconstructive analysis, as explained in Carspecken (1995), which includes meaning field analysis, a listing of possible meanings that others in the setting might infer, either tacitly or overtly. Additionally, validity reconstructions were conducted through the use of horizon analysis, which attempt to make explicit elements of meaning that are, in most cases, understood tacitly. The data were coded using emic categories which emerged from the text itself. Patterns of interaction were analyzed to determine roles used by the actors in various settings. Power relations were analyzed according to a system based on Weber's typology of interactive power: coercion and authority, charismatic, legal-rational, and traditional (1978).

Narrative

The Multiple Intelligences study group, which became the focus of the study, formed an interesting cross-section of the faculty. There were two first grade teachers, Anne Duncan and John Martinez, four from third -- Courtney Flowers, Tom Jefferies, Susan Peters, and Kerry Evans -- one fifth grade language arts teacher, Laura Boone, Lillian Rogers (resource teacher), Megan Kenneally (speech pathologist), Amanda Winters, (librarian), Claudia Thomas, (teacher technologist), Linda Rosen, (Chapter I coordinator), Karen Stuart, (the magnet program coordinator), Mary Roman, the principal, and the researcher, a fourth grade language arts teacher. They represented all of the instructional programs at Sam Houston, and expressed similar concerns about how to best teach the children they served. The study group began tentatively, seeking to define the genre according to "the experts" and to make the facilitator take on an expert role. They were frank about the questions they had, but uncertain as to the direction they wanted to take. John Martinez and Claudia Thomas asked for an instrument that would help them assess their own intelligence profile, something quantifiable and objective rather than a self-diagnosis. Claudia's requests in this session were all for information about "how the experts do it," or for a model against which to compare themselves. This view of knowledge as a thing that can be passed from the experts to us was widely held at the outset of the study group, and is referenced in the following interchange between the principal and the researcher:

> Ms. Roman: *Barbara, since you have gone to David Lazear and you've done a lot on your master's, why don't we do some like mini-presentations and you get us started and then we'll divide into subgroups because technically you have the expertise enough to get us started*
>
> Author: *Well, I could*
>
> Ms. Roman: *rather than us come bumbling around. Because you went with Ms. Flowers and I to see him, and you went off to David Lazear. I went to Indianapolis but you know, if you want. I think that would be a good starting place for this group for you to give like an overview and then perhaps they could do a presentation.*
>
> Author, with a falling inflection: *OK.*
>
> Ms. Roman: *Well, not a big dramatic thing, just some 'This is my turn to sum up with some presentation" and go back and study whatever you presented. It's just a*
>
> Claudia: *Or to check and see if what we're doing if it really in fact is*
>
> Ms. Roman: *And you might divide it into two subgroups at a certain point after the first thing*

At the following meeting, another planning session, teachers were still tentative, but the tone was much lighter. There was a great deal of humor, indicating a growing level of comfort with the concept of Multiple Intelligences, accompanied by a higher level of participation. At this point, the eight teachers who were present took ownership of their learning, as evidenced by the following excerpt.

> Karen: *I wanted to ask you on these articles you're talking about, remember some of us were in the study group where we used to pass things around. I'd be interested in looking at those. I don't know if anyone else is.*
>
> Author: *Oh sure.*
>
> Karen: *If I should just borrow the whole thing, or if I should start passing them around.*
>
> Courtney: *I tell you what, I'm having so much trouble with visual-spatial and bodily kinesthetic. I need to set up one of them to make myself research this a little more and figure it out. I can do that.*

By the end of the second session, roles had begun to shift from teachers being empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge, to experienced professionals working together to improve their practice. They referred to teaching as a source of both knowledge and puzzlement. Entries in the group's dialogue journal reflect both an eagerness to turn theory into practice as well as the desire to learn from one another. The following dialogue journal entries are examples:

> 10-18-95
>
> Where to start! I'm anxious and excited about learning about the applications of MI after having read numerous pages of [information.] I am looking for ways to tie in the kinesthetic, inter and intra personal aspects of teaching math and social studies!
>
> 11-13-95
>
> We've done some alphabet/letter formation with "bodies." The children who like it the most are probably the ones that need it the most. I'll be interested to hear more (Barbara!) about it!
>
> Anne Duncan

When study groups next met, the Multiple Intelligences group began to analyze their own intelligence profiles. Teachers were willing participants in the activities that they had planned, a mix of adult activities focusing on the various intelligences and the sharing of successful teaching practices. The meeting was characterized by humorous exchanges as teachers experimented with

new ideas and respectful attention to one another when teachers shared stories from their own practice.

Laura: *We're going to do the Hustle.*

Claudia: *Aah! How many years?*

Author: *It's over here. Is it plugged in?*

Claudia: Hums the tune. Laughs.

Author: *I don't think I ever did the Hustle!*

Claudia: Then, in a fake New York accent: *The Jersey shore.*

Amanda: *The Jersey shore!*

Megan: *Doin' the hustle!*

And, as Courtney Flowers demonstrated some examples of activities that she used with her math students:

Courtney: *Then they explore the capacity and the space it'll actually take up 'cause some of them will f it inside one another.* Pauses as she rattles materials on her cart. *They also, you can even make containers, have the kids make containers so that these will fit inside of them,so that they can judge and look and just kind of estimate how many will fit inside a particular container that they have made with these dimensions, and* (spoken with an upward inflection as she reaches for the next item) *our Junior Achievement fellow came and he made the children make these little boxes and they put them all together to make the city, so they start out like this* (shows a two-dimensional shape that requires some folding and pasting) *so if your child is not very good spatially, they might have trouble folding it together so they can create the box.*

Tom makes a comment about folding maps.

Courtney: *And then I have puzzles at the bottom, so that it's just a matter of putting pieces together and seeing that this part will fit into this other part spatially. If you're spatial, it'll probably be easy for you; if you're not, if you're like me, you get lost in*

Megan: *Courtney, if you did follow a map, then you are not strong in what?*

Courtney: *Spatial.*

The third study group meeting was preempted by a regional math conference, but Laura Boone, Anne Duncan, Tom Jefferies, Megan Kenneally, and the facilitator met to write a proposal for a grant that would provide the group with materials for study the following year. The atmosphere was casual, with group members contributing suggestions freely.

Author: *"One sentence listing the goals of your study group."*

Tom: *Well,* unintelligible *how to better understand our students so we can better help them.*

Author: *OK.*

Tom: *I mean, say it in a grant-type way.*

Author: *Well, I don't know.*

Anne: *To apply what we um*

Tom: *To to um give teachers a a network of support in applying these techniques to further develop our students' academic achievements.*

Author: *Is Ooh. is to* long pause as she types. *Want to be practitioners or teachers?*

Tom: *Practitioners, I like that.*

Anne: *Um hmm!*

The last two study group sessions were devoted to exercises exploring Gardner's (1983) personal intelligences and planning for the future of the group. At this point, teachers took charge of the direction that the study group took, and the facilitator had become a voice in the conversation, rather than a determining force. In the following excerpt, teachers discuss how Mother Teresa would help children develop spirituality in the public school.

Megan: *No, I know. I'm trying to think how could she because -- the health care* unintelligible *word. You know -- You're leaving your children in a school that um* unintelligible *class that are not trained in* [counseling] *or anything, you know.* Pause for about two seconds. *This child doesn't have anything to eat at home, or doesn't have any clothes; couldn't this child be taught to think of him?*
[*You know, be taught to think of others?*

Ms. Boone: [*Yeah.*

Megan: *Your basis is a personal thing, like* unintelligible. *On a personal level, I don't think I've taught my own children to be involved in the idea of service.*

Ms. Winters asks a question about service.

Ms. Duncan: *Do you really think you have to* unintelligible?

Megan: *Yeah! They*

A couple of voices enter in the conversation, commenting.

At the last session, leadership shifted from the facilitator to Kerry Evans.

Author: *What what we want to think about, though is how, what we want to do with the time and maybe it's time to disband and reband and*

Kerry: *I would vote for that, unless we're going to do some sort of a culminating thing where we, I don't know show each other our class. You know what might, well, you know what might be really -- I don't if anybody wants to do this, or if it suits anybody's purposes, but if each of us had a Multiple Intelligences activity that we really liked that was up and coming, one thing that we could do is take the school video camera around, and just videotape that activity and then we would have like one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine? Are you gonna do it ten? eleven classes worth of a little something to show. It wouldn't take very long. It might only be ten, fifteen minutes, and I'd be glad to videotape. I do that, quite a lot.*

Author: *And you're good at it, so it would look like a good video.*

Kerry: *I mean, just to do it to show the kinds of things that we've developed. And then that could go into the school library for anybody that came in brand-new as a teacher and felt what is this stuff? and particularly, particularly*

Amanda: *If you want to do that* unintelligible

Kerry: Unintelligible *That would give somebody an idea, particularly if each one, if we managed to actually make sure that we had at least one activity for each intelligence.*

Claudia: *Yeah.*

Kerry: *Anybody, mean, is that not too terrorizing for anybody? I don't think it's a big deal, just coming in*

Other teachers raise questions about the process. Kerry and John explain the nature of the film and its purpose.

Roles within the Study Group

Throughout the course of the study groups, members assumed a variety of roles. Although some of them overlap, the facilitator operated within one set of roles, group members another, and the principal from a third. Each set of roles will be discussed in turn, and a discussion of their interrelatedness will follow.

The group facilitator acted through several roles which can be divided into four categories, and are discussed in order of their frequency of use.

The Facilitator. In this role, Barbara tacitly communicated that, although she was responsible for the structure of study group sessions, she was willing to share both leadership and expertise. The tacit claim in this role was an expectation of cooperation and a willingness to share control of the group with its members. In general, this role was played fairly consistently throughout the course of the 1995-96 school year and was manifested through several subroles:

The Group Leader, in which she set the meeting agendas, made suggestions, and referred

group members to the readings.

> Barbara: *OK. Well, should we start by looking at this book chapter?*
>
> Laura: *What page?*
>
> Barbara: *Well, I*
>
> Megan: *Sixteen?*
>
> Barbara: *Yeah. Well, I think I highlighted sixteen to twenty-seven because it might be good for us to see how what we're doing fits in the framework and whether it's something we need to practice or not. Or if it's something we're already doing. Did anybody notice anything they wanted to start with?*

The Clerical Manager, in which she made arrangements for materials and equipment and asked group members for input on the direction of subsequent meetings.

> Barbara: *Remember, somebody asked about assessing multiple intelligences. Well, I found this in my book.*

The Democrat. Barbara, as The Democrat, communicated that the study group was a collaborative effort, asking group members for input and providing them opportunities to take on expert roles. The tacit claim was one of mutual respect and responsibility. Within this role, she enacted the following:

The Egalitarian -- In this role, Barbara referred to the collaborative nature of the study group, mostly by asking questions.

> Barbara: *I'm not sure where we want to go. I think we're sort of at a loss. . . I'm open to suggestions because it's* ***everybody's*** *group.*

The Reflective Teacher -- Barbara focused on her experiences as a teacher as they related to the material being discussed.

> Barbara: *I used to do that um, when they wrote, I'd put music on. I haven't done it this year,um . . . Well, it's just. Well, the thing is, I don't know that it would necessarily be a calming influence.*

The Reluctant Leader -- As The Reluctant Leader, Barbara voiced both tentativeness and an unwillingness to make decisions that would determine the course that the group would take. This role was abandoned after the first meeting as other group members began to express opinions and make suggestions. The following is an example of how Barbara

functioned in this role.

> Barbara: *I'm not exactly sure what we want to do with the study group. Do we want to look at this as a time where we can look at the innovation, see how it would apply to us, and maybe try some things in our classrooms and then the next time we get together talk about how it worked or do we just want to read and study and leave implementation out? I don't know what everybody wants, so*

The Follower -- This role appeared only in the first and last meetings. As The Follower, Barbara supported suggestions from other group members and gave them the opportunity to take on leadership roles within the group.

The Leader. When acting as The Leader, Barbara tacitly communicated ownership of both the group and the knowledge that it possessed, claiming both authority and responsibility for the group's operation and success. Within this role there were two subroles, which virtually disappeared after the first two meetings.

The Expert -- Barbara used this role to focus the group on information that she thought particularly important, and to control the group's activities.

The Trickster/Con Artist -- As The Trickster, Barbara secured advantageous room assignments or solicited volunteers to plan and organize various aspects of the study group's functioning, as evidenced by the following example:

> Barbara: *I guess we can meet here.*
>
> Elizabeth Copperfield, another group leader: *I want to meet here.*
>
> Other unintelligible comments about proximity to snacks.
>
> Barbara: *Ms. W. has generously donated the library to our group .*
>
> Elizabeth, loudly: *No, no. I've already called it, Barbara!* She is smiling as she says this.

The Group Member. This role tacitly communicated equality with the other group members and claimed that everyone had an equal stake in the group's functioning. Within her role as The Group Member, Barbara assumed two subroles, The Comedian and One of the Gang, both of which were used to demonstrate her solidarity with her colleagues. The Comedian was used sparingly in the first two sessions and with increasing frequency during later meetings. One of the Gang did not appear until the third session, and was only used during group activities, such as a discussion of a brief excerpt of the film, *Jurassic Park* (1993):

Barbara, responding to Susan's comment about nonverbal communication: *Yeah. Um, I thought it was kind of the relationship between Grant and Sattler that kind of showed the same way, nonverbally, what relationship they had to one another, um. Very quickly they showed the relationship they had to the Scotch guy*

Study group members also displayed a number of roles, which varied among individuals and across observations. They can be placed into four categories, and will be discussed in order of their frequency of use.

The Engaged Learner. While acting in this role, group members communicated that they were actively involved in the activities with a tacit claim of equal partnership in the learning enterprise. This role was manifested through several subroles, including:

Equal Partner -- sharing information or questions, actively participating in the conversation

The Reflective Teacher -- referred to elements of their teaching practice, either as a concern or an example of the topic at hand

The Cheerleader -- commented supportively on a colleague's work, especially attempts at implementing a Multiple Intelligences activity in his/her classroom

The following example shows all members as Equal Partners, John and Susan as Reflective Teachers, and Anne and Claudia acting as Cheerleaders. This pattern developed over the course of the study group sessions, beginning tentatively in the first observations and becoming the dominant role complex by the later meetings.

Claudia: *And of course for interpersonal, that's where they're working in groups and. Intrapersonal, I don't know, how would they feel about this?* Laughs

Claudia: *They're probably excited about*

John: *Oh, yeah, I think they're having a good time, so that's what they're working on now.*

Susan: *Oh, I'm just trying to figure out if I'm really doing this!* Laughs

Barbara: *Probably!*

Susan: *I'm trying to*

Anne: *Oh, with your forest!*

Susan: *Yeah. Well, with the forest and the desert and -- I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt.*

John: *That's, that's it. We just started it this week, so*

Barbara: *Sounds fun.*

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Claudia: So, *are you going to present it to the whole school?*

John: *No, they, they were asking me that. I said, "Well, it depends on you guys."*

Anne: *Are you gonna do it for the first grade?*

Susan: *Yeah!*

John: You know, *I told them it depends on how they feel about it. If they feel like they'll , you know, they want to go out and do it: well, we'll do it.*

Claudia: *You could charge admission!*

Laughter.
Claudia: *Well, a quarter!*

The Insider. All study group members adopted this role throughout the sessions, communicating cordial working relationships. The tacit claim is one of equality and respect. It was referenced through humorous comments about the topics of study and references to relationships both within and outside of the work setting.

Susan laughs. *It is Tom's birthday.* Laughs. Others join in, including Tom.

Courtney: *Look at his face!*

Barbara: *Well, if*

Susan: *I'm helping, Tom*

Courtney: *I'm sorry*

Barbara: *if I had known in advance, I would have gone to Audio-Video Plus and rented it, but*

Susan: *And got something special! And got him something special!* Laughs.

Tom [makes a laughing comment about downtown

Barbara: *Instead I picked the* [*only film that was not a cartoon that we had at home.*

The Leader. Teachers adopted this role at various times within the sessions. It communicated both confidence and comfort within the group, and claimed equality and respect. This role contained three subroles, which are described below.

The Expert -- speaking confidently about specialized information that he/she had and was willing to share with the group, including theoretical knowledge, teaching strategies, and

useful materials

The Group Leader -- led the discussion and/or proposed new activities. Kerry Evans was the only group member to manifest this role during the 1995-96 school, when she began to plan the design for a demonstration video.

The Organizer -- took care of the physical arrangement of the room, making copies, or reminding group members of the schedule. Every group member acted in this role throughout the year.

The Outsider. In this role, the teacher referred to group members as "you" or "y'all," or sat apart from the group, taking notes, communicating distance from the rest of the group. The tacit claim was one of separation and, because of the position of the two group members who adopted it, superordinance. Megan Kenneally adopted this role in the earliest sessions as she discussed the differences between classroom activities and those of a speech pathologist, but abandoned it midway through the year. Karen Stuart, the Magnet Coordinator (a quasi-administrative position), took notes throughout all of the sessions but equally referenced The Engaged Learner.

The principal, Mary Roman, was present at only the first study group meeting, during which she assumed the role of The Traditional Principal, which communicated that she was the person with sole and ultimate authority over the comings and goings at her school. The tacit claim was an expectation of compliance and deference. She manifested this role through several sub-roles:

The Boss -- Scheduling meetings, requesting participation, genially cutting teachers off

> Ms. Roman: *Do y'all want to meet next Wednesday?*
>
> Barbara: *I, well we have scheduled staff development time. Mary has very generously asked if we wanted some Wednesdays, some time on our own.*
>
> Kerry: *Some groups share things that they're trying tell us how they worked.*
>
> Courtney, to Amanda about her earlier question: *Drawing, and making dioramas. That way I make them [unintelligible] so when I make all that stuff I still feel like I did not*
>
> The study group is talking, for the most part, about ideas that were generated during the session. Part of the group is negotiating a short meeting for the following Wednesday after school.
>
> Ms. Roman: *Hey guys, do you want to meet for twenty minutes next week?* Comments *Next week, in here?*

The Provider -- Reminds teachers of materials or opportunities that she has given them. Ms. Roman used this role when teachers have assumed leadership roles, or when she wanted to influence the course of events within a meeting.

The Olympian -- Claims to be unaware of schedules, disinterested in mundane matters, leaves the session in a highly visible manner, or does not attend the meeting. The tacit message is that these matters are not worthy of her notice and are best left to subordinates. This role is assumed through her absence from all but the first of the study group meetings.

As mentioned in the discussion of roles, teachers began their participation in study groups tentatively, looking to the facilitator for answers to their questions as well as providing a structure for meetings. By the third meeting they became equal participants, comfortable with expressing both their satisfactions with and puzzlement over the innovations they were trying in their classrooms. They expressed satisfaction with the study group experience and looked forward to continuing their meetings during the 1996-97 school year. Tables 1 and 2 show the relationship between the changes in Barbara's use of roles and the accompanying developments in study group members.

Table 1 -- Role Frequency by Session -- Barbara

Session	Facilitator	Democrat	Leader	Group Member
1	15	10	13	4
2	34	12	14	2
3	23	7	4	13
4	10	5	5	12
5	9	4	3	10
6	11	9	3	3

Table 2 -- Role Frequency by Session -- Study Group Members

Session	Engaged Learner	Leader	Insider	Outsider
1	14	2	2	1
2	34	17	11	2
3	43	11	29	4
4	41	4	43	0
5	39	12	6	2
6	33	25	19	1

Power and the School Structure

According to the School Improvement Plan, Sam Houston Elementary is governed by the Shared Decision Making Committee elected by the faculty, two parents selected by the PTA, two community members selected by the principal, one volunteer business partner, and the principal, who serves as chair. Every teacher in the school is connected to this body through their membership in one of four standing committees; Budget/Finance. Faculty Advisory, Personnel, Parent Communication, or Curriculum (which is further subdivided into committees focusing on each of the academic disciplines). Although the SDMC is the school's governing body, it is the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC), composed of the principal and grade level or department chairs, that oversees its daily functioning. Both of the governing committees operate democratically; however the general practice is to agree with the principal's wishes. Opinions vary as to the function of these committees. Megan Kenneally, a third-term SDMC member, stated that there the committee was not a rubber-stamp group, and Patricia Jackson, on the FAC, said that they don't always agree with Ms. Roman. Susan Peters, after a few months of serving on the SDMC, said, "I'm beginning to think that SDMC doesn't do anything, either," referring to meaningful decision-making.

Along with the formal, democratic structures for school governance, there exists another, informal structure. The principal, Mary Roman, has an open-door policy. Thus, any teacher with an idea, complaint, or suggestion for improvement may go directly to the person in charge, bypassing official channels. While this results in improvements for the vocal faculty members, who are typically white women, it also causes some resentment among quieter or less innovative teachers,as well as rivalries when teachers compete for her attention and support for pet projects. It further divides the faculty into insider and outsider groups, those who call the principal Mary and the others who address her as Ms. Roman.

There are a variety of perceptions about the school structure. Although there are some similarities among the views of Ms. Roman, Susan Peters (a second-year teacher), and Margo Green (a mid-career teacher), the differences are striking. Ms. Roman sees the school as a cohesive unit working to carry out her vision, which is constrained by state and district mandates as well as standardized tests (see Figure 1). She sees the teachers at her school as being mindful of the mandates, but expresses no responsibility toward them herself. The hierarchy is firmly

established. Susan Peters views the hierarchy in a different light, with very loose ties from the district to the daily functioning of the school, the principal in unstructured communication with the committees, who rarely communicate with each other (see Figure 2.) Margo Green description of the school organizational structure is that it is characterized by confusion and a lack of communication (see Figure 3). She describes in detail the results of Ms. Roman's open-door policy on the relationships and daily functioning at Sam Houston Elementary.

Figure 1, The Principal's View of School Organization

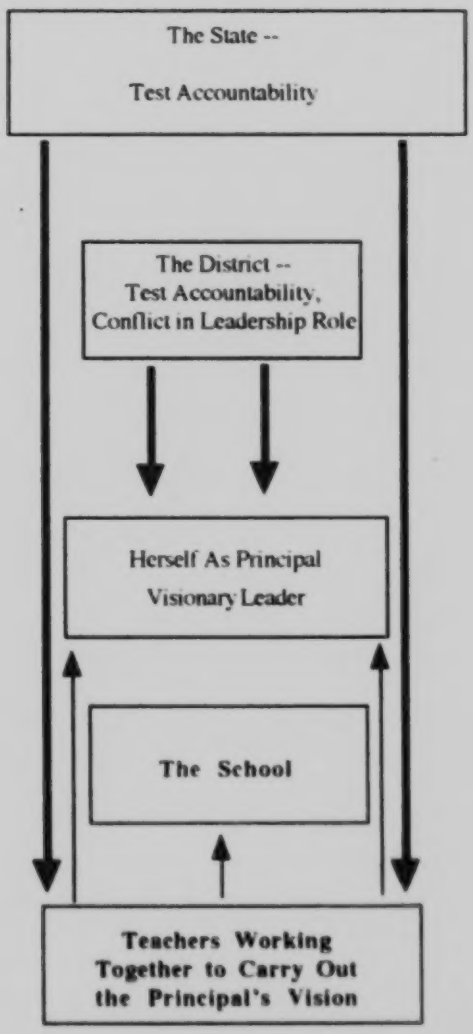


Figure 2 -- Susan Peters's View of School Organization

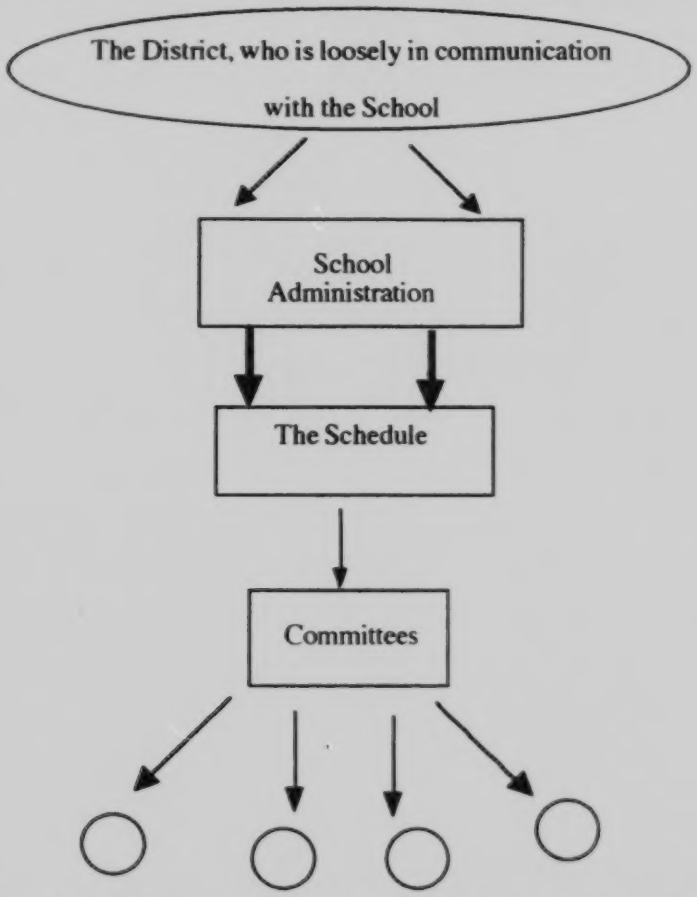
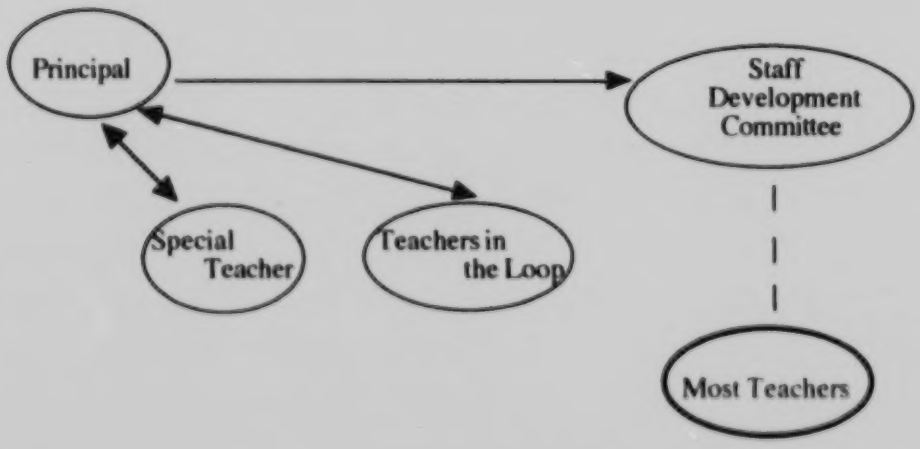


Figure 3, Margo Green's View of School Organization



Analysis of the staff development sessions at Sam Houston Elementary reveals several power structures which at times may operate in conflict with one another. On the surface, power is shared among the faculty in conjunction with a democratic principal. Nell Martin, as chair of the Staff Development Committee, is officially in charge of the agenda at the meetings, a fact which Ms. Roman states. However, in both of the interactions at the first meeting, she allows Nell to begin to organize, then disrupts the flow with PTA and, later, school garden business. The same thing happens to teachers who are given the task of presenting information to the faculty. Although the principal operates within a model ostensibly based on shared power, she uses her position and considerable charm to undercut the authority granted to subordinates. In addition, her absence from staff development sessions and frequent absences for attendance at district-level meetings suggests that she sees herself as removed from her staff rather than a democratic leader.

The discrepancy between the stated governance structure and the one actually in operation led staff members to write a list of grievances and confront Ms. Roman about their concerns during the last month of the school year. Although the teachers who attended the grievance meeting were not all members of the Multiple Intelligences study group, all of the study group members except for Kerry Evans (who knew nothing about it) were at the meeting and among the most vocal in expressing their concerns and desire to work as a team to solve the problems facing the school. Ms. Roman reacted by offering explanations for her frequent absences, and suggesting that perhaps she had allowed her teachers too much power in the operation of Sam Houston Elementary. The year ended with teachers and administration operating under an uneasy truce, hoping that a vacation would give everyone a new perspective on the issues.

When the 1996-97 school year began, Ms. Roman operated entirely from the Traditional Principal role, making frequent use of The Gun, in which she communicated her desires through direct confrontation. Penny Powell, the teacher referred to as "the special teacher" by Margo Green, was appointed Instructional Coordinator, thus making official the power relations that existed unofficially the year before. Teachers voted to continue to use study groups as the school's predominant form of professional development. Because of the conflict between teachers and administration, it was decided to hire a consultant to work on communication and team building. Study groups were no longer an official staff development option. The original group and another

one, led by Megan Kenneally began to meet after school at locations off campus. Both groups became places for teachers to discuss their concerns in a safe and supportive environment through conversations on topics as diverse as spirituality and charter schools.

Study groups at Sam Houston Elementary have become places for teachers to explore issues of common concern, whether involving teaching practice, school governance, or their own spiritual growth. They have become an important part of school life, even though they no longer are a part of the school's professional development plan. In spite of their unofficial status, there is some evidence that study groups exert some control over the daily functioning of the school, such as scheduling general faculty meetings around group sessions, or the memo inviting all staff members to participate in one of the ongoing study groups.

Sam Houston Elementary, like many other schools, is faced with the dilemma of self-governance accompanied by increasingly strict bureaucratic mandates. For many of its teachers, study groups have become a place to make sense of the new demands that have been made of them and to have a voice in controlling some part of their professional destinies. Whether their commitment to collaborative staff development is strong enough to overcome administrative obstacles, or if they continue to meet off-campus in spite of increasing demands on their time, is a question that remains to be answered. One thing is certain; whatever their place in the official school structure, study groups will continue to be a major part of teachers' professional lives at Sam Houston Elementary.

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